

CHAPTER 10

Staying Mission-Driven

STAYING TRUE TO THE EQUAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY'S VISION...
CHECKING THE COMPASS AND THE MAP

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

We are the champions of justice
And we'll fight to deserve your trust in us
We are the champions, we are the champions
No time to lose now, if we are the champions
Of the law

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*From "The State's Greatest Superheroes: The Justice League of Washington vs. Supervillain Status Quo — When Indifference Strikes,"
written and produced for WORKING TOGETHER TO CHAMPION JUSTICE,
Washington State's Fifth Annual Access to Justice Conference, September 2000*



As on any journey, the road to a viable equal justice vision requires that you consult your compass (principles and values) and your map (your plans) to keep heading in the right direction. Fidelity to your mission also requires that partners and leaders collaboratively take steps and create accountability mechanisms, systems, rituals, devices and "tickler systems." These systems and mechanisms will help you evaluate your progress (mileposts and landmarks), and ensure that all members of the community have a clear understanding of their reciprocal obligations to be accountable to client communities, to their Equal Justice Community partners, and to the overall structure of the community.

The purpose of any Equal Justice Community's structure is to ensure the delivery of high quality civil legal services to low income and vulnerable people. Quality is measured in terms of:

- individual services to clients;
- the system's capacity to provide a relevant and full range of services to all clients;
- whether the system is effective and economical in its use of scarce resources;
- the extent to which the community is effective at leveraging and expanding resources;



"As the Hallmarks of an Effective Civil Legal Services Delivery System are guiding principles for the Access to Justice Network, so the Accountability Standards are the quality guidelines and criteria for programs in the network."

**Barbara Clark, Director
of the Legal Foundation
of Washington**

- avoiding duplication, and supporting excellence in quality; and
- educating the public about the need for ensuring equal justice for all.

The community should strive to balance innovation, flexibility, creativity and agility with stability, constancy of focus and purpose over time, and the capacity to underwrite and support long-term client community commitments and engagement. Different actions can be taken, and accountability mechanisms developed to help keep the Equal Justice Community "on track" with these goals in a manner that is consistent with the vision and the values.

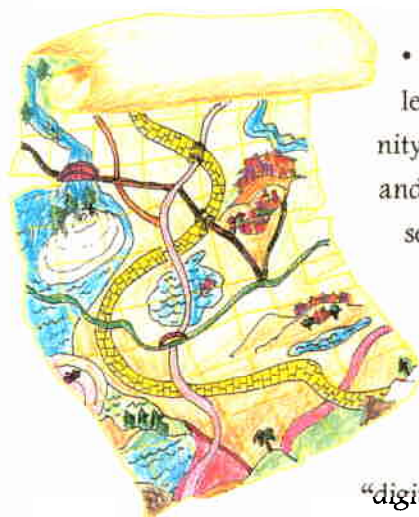
EXAMPLES OF SUCH ACTIONS AND MECHANISMS INCLUDE:

ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR CLIENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

The Legal Foundation of Washington, which administers IOLTA funds, turned the development of Civil Equal Justice Performance Standards over to the Access to Justice Board, which appointed a committee to develop standards for all civil legal services providers, including pro bono and volunteer, law school clinical, and staffed programs. Another major statewide funder, the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development (administers state filing fee and general fund monies for civil legal services for poor people), participated in the development of the standards. The ATJ Board adopted the proposed Standards. The Legal Foundation requires its grantees to comply with the standards, and many partner organizations have formally adopted them.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE GOAL OF AN INTEGRATED AND COLLABORATIVE CLIENT SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM

1. Technology: As described in earlier chapters, there is a coordinated statewide workplan for communications and technology ("ComTech Vision"). Such a plan improves quality and accountability by:



- allowing for coordinated and uniform data collection and data generation by the Equal Justice Community — a more effective way to identify emerging patterns and problems facing the client communities, unmet needs, service gaps, and high demand areas of client need;
- affording universal access to uniform, high quality community legal education resources for those clients who are able to take advantage of Internet- and telephonically-based technology (in spite of the so-called "digital divide"); easy access to these same resources by pro

bono volunteers, human and social service organizations and equal justice system service providers;

- testing all technology developments for fidelity to the vision, values and goals of the overall equal justice effort, and ensuring that they serve a specific “ComTech Vision” before resources are expended;
- ensuring uniform upgrading and updating of technology across the spectrum of Equal Justice Community providers;
- maximizing effective and economical use of resources for development of computer resource banks, website development and maintenance, and other technological developments;
- ensuring there is an “air traffic safety control” mechanism to coordinate Equal Justice Community technology developments with similar, related and/or potentially duplicative efforts by other entities such as court administrators, domestic violence victim protection and advocacy networks, law enforcement, law libraries and public libraries, attorney general’s office, judicial branch, state and local bar association efforts, and so forth.

Resource development and fundraising must be coordinated and planned, on the state, regional and local levels, in a manner which reinforces and strengthens the equal justice vision and values.



2. Regional Planning: It is impossible to maintain fidelity to client-centeredness by operating at the statewide level alone. Consequently, in addition to providing for coordination and integration of client service delivery including intake, screening and referral mechanisms, training and technical assistance, etc., a state plan should also ensure proper resources and support for coordinated regional and local planning by all Equal Justice Community partners within the regions of your state (see Regional Planning Guidelines).

3. Resource development: Effective collaboration and coordination of resource development and fundraising may be the “last bastion of turf” in many states. This is certainly true in Washington. The link between equal justice vision and values with resource development/acquisition versus resource allocation/distribution is the arena in which organizational history and pride, reputation, “baggage” (both good and bad), identity, individual career identity and pride, and external politics and loyalties all make it extremely difficult for all partners to come to the table with a completely “clean slate” on which only equal justice vision and values are written.

O.K., this is not rocket science, but we would be remiss if we did not mention here the aspiration that resource development and fundraising be coordinated and planned, on the state, regional and local levels, in a manner which reinforces and strengthens the equal justice vision and values (see Resource Development protocol, www.wsba.org/atj).

4. “A symbol is worth a thousand words” — the ATJ “Bug”: The Equal Justice Community uses an “Access to Justice” symbol, which is a tiny map of our state framed by the words: “Member, Washington State Access to Justice Network.” The bug identifies partner organizations as members on publications, documents, videos and other information and materials that are widely disseminated. It helps to keep members of our Equal Justice Community accountable to one another as partners in a common effort greater than themselves as individuals and individual organizations.



ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH A COORDINATING BOARD

The Access to Justice Board, its committees and its work groups act as accountability mechanisms, clearinghouses, coordinating bodies and “air traffic control centers” to ensure that the goals of the Equal Justice Community are achieved in a manner consistent with integration and collaboration so as to minimize wasteful duplication of effort and unproductive competition. A coordinating board is the place where equal justice-related initiatives can be tested and checked for adherence to the vision, values and state plan.

Examples include:

- statewide coordination between the Access to Justice Network and a major new initiative by the Board for Judicial Administration on judicial system improvements, including improvements pertaining directly and disproportionately to vulnerable and poor people;
- statewide coordination of the development of a “technology bill of rights” to minimize the harmful effects of the “digital divide” on access to justice for poor and vulnerable populations;
- statewide coordination of judicial system improvements in the areas of family law and domestic violence victims’ equal justice;
- statewide coordination of justice system efforts related to diversity, inclusion and multiculturalism in the courts, legal profession, law schools, arena of public legal education, including the development of a statewide workplan on diversity, inclusion and multiculturalism as a justice imperative;
- statewide coordination of VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) grant proposals to ensure focus on the highest priority areas of client need as determined by a statewide survey;
- statewide coordination of Public Legal Education (PLE) efforts by the state bar, educational entities including K-12 education systems, the media, justice system-related organizations that serve the public, and civil legal services organiza-

tions that serve poor and vulnerable people, etc., to ensure that these statewide efforts reinforce and strengthen the equal justice vision;

- regular reports to the State Supreme Court and to the governing body of the State Bar on the progress of its 15 Committees and working groups, and the Equal Justice Community's efforts consistent with the Hallmarks and the State Plan.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE EQUAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY TO BOTH SHORT- AND LONG-TERM GOALS

Periodic review and reassessment of the vision and values are a community wide process. Mechanisms include:

- ATJ Conference report recommendations
- ATJ Board priorities and workplans
- ATJ Board-adopted State Plans

"The information age in which we now live presents an unparalleled opportunity for the leaders of our justice system to embrace technology and enhance the ability of all individuals to access justice in a way never before imagined."

Hon. T.W. "Chip" Small,
Chair,
Access to Justice Board

EXERCISES

- ✓ What would you like to see in a set of accountability and performance standards for client service providers?
- ✓ What accountability and performance standards-related mechanisms are already in use in your state?
- ✓ What gaps exist, and how might these be addressed? By whom?

REFERENCES TO PART II

Washington State Civil Equal Justice Performance Standards (1999) page 175

Access to Justice Conference Recommendations (1999) page 131

Access to Justice Board's Reports to the Supreme Court and the
WSBA Board of Governors

www.wsba.org/atj/publications

Resource Development Protocol (Revised Plan for the Delivery of
Civil Legal Services to Low Income People in Washington State, page 46)

www.wsba.org/atj/1999/plan.htm

Performance Standard One: Strategic and Collaborative Planning

The organization consults with Access to Justice partners, clients and stakeholders to identify the most pressing needs of the client community. The organization delivers services that are responsive to client needs, consistent with the Hallmarks, the organization's duties under the State Plan and the organization's mission.

From Washington State
Civil Equal Justice
Performance Standards